



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Into life and revenge from the conquer-
or's chain !
Oh Liberty ! let not this spirit have rest,
Till it move, like a breeze, o'er the waves
of the west,
Give the light of your look to each sorrow-
ful spot,
Nor Oh ! be the shamrock of Erin forgot,
While you add to your garland the olive
of Spain.

If the fame of our fathers, bequeath'd with
their rights,
Give to country its charm, and to home
its delights,

If deceit be a wound and suspicion a
stain ;
Then ye men of Iberia, our cause is the
same,
And oh ! may his tomb want a tear and
a name,
Who would ask for a nobler, a holier death,
Than to turn his last sigh into victory's
breath,
For the shamrock of Erin, and olive of
Spain.

Ye Blakes and O'Donnells, whose fathers
resign'd
The green hills of their youth, among
strangers to find
That repose, which at home, they had
sigh'd for in vain ;
Breathe a hope that the magical flame
which you light,

May be felt yet in Erin, as calm, and as
bright,
And forgive even Albion, while blushing
she draws,
Like a truant, her sword, in the long slight-
ed cause,
Of the shamrock of Erin, and olive of
Spain.
God prosper the cause—oh ! it cannot
but thrive,
While the pulse of one patriot heart is
alive,
Its devotion to feel and its rights to
maintain ;
Then, how sainted by sorrow its martyrs
will die,
The finger of glory shall point where they
lie,
While, far from the footstep of coward or
slave,
The young spirit of Freedom shall shelter
their grave,
Beneath shamrocks of Erin and olives of
Spain.

EPICRAM ON THE FUNERALS OF LORD NELSON
AND THE HON. W. PITT, ADDRESSED TO BO-
NAPARTE.

BY GENERAL FITZPATRICK.

FROWN not at funeral honours paid to
him,
Who oft has beat thy fleet,
Since the same pomp awaits on Pitt,
Whose blunders made thee great.

ANCIENT LITERATURE.

The comparative authenticity of Tacitus and Suetonius, illustrated by the question, "Whether Nero was the Author of the Memorable Conflagration at Rome?" By Arthur Browne, L.L.D. S.F.T.C.D. and M.R.I.A.

SO much has been said of the candour of Suetonius, and of his work being the most accurate narration extant of the lives of the Emperors, that it is worth the pains to inquire how far these praises are due. Others are said to have been actuated by hatred, or slaves to adulation; he is represented alone as fair and uninfluenced.* For my own part I so much

differ from this opinion, that I have ever considered the rank allotted to Suetonius, in the scale of historical merit, as elevated much beyond his deserts. I am not inclined to trust either his candour or his accuracy, particularly when opposed to, or compared with his rival historian. We are accustomed, I know not how, at an early age, from cotemporary studies, to unite the names of cotemporary historians, and from thence perhaps insensibly to infer a similarity of excellence. The authors perused treat of the same facts, they are read at the same time, and the mind is yet too young for accurate discrimination. May not such associations have had some effect with respect to Suetonius and Tacitus? But the exercise of maturer judgment readily

* See the encomiums collected by Pitiscus, in the preface to his edition of Suetonius.

separates such unions, and detects the apparent parallelism of objects, which, sufficiently pursued, will be found in time infinitely to diverge. This judgment, however, is, in many cases never exercised at all.

A premature perusal of the classics often prevents a subsequent cool revival of their beauties and their merits; impels the man to consider the subjects of the studies of the boy as trifling and disgusting, and indolently to acquiesce in first impressions, rather than retrace steps which appeared unpleasant because involuntary. But he who at maturer years, is led by taste or inclination to examine and compare the lights of antiquity, will be astonished at the numerous detections of his errors first imbibed, and corrections of the implicit faith which he has put in some of its oracles; and perhaps no where will he find less reason for confidence than in the secretary of Adrian (for such was Suetonius) however high his post or good his means of information.

The title of this Essay indicates my intention to confine my observations to the comparative fidelity in narration of the celebrated writers therein mentioned, without touching on their other relative perfections or imperfections. The instance which I have selected to illustrate this point (for abundance of them might be found*) may to some appear trifling; and it may be asked,

* Such as Suetonius' assertion, that Tiberius abolished the privilege of sanctuary, when the contrary, which is asserted by Tacitus, is proved beyond a doubt, by coins subsequent to his reign; his making Germanicus conquer a king of Armenia, when Armenia had no king, and was not at war with Rome; his representation of the character of Nero, in many respects differing from the traits given by Tacitus and others; his mentioning the loss of an army in Asia, when from Tacitus it appears it was only the rumour of such a loss. Surely these variances would not have appeared trifling to Lipsius, who took such pains to reconcile these authors, when differing in the point, Whether Agrippa Posthumus was killed by a centurion or a tribune of the soldiers. Josephus observes, that no man's character has been more misrepresented from adulation on the one side and prejudice on the other, than Nero's.

BELFAST MAG. NO. VIII.

who, in the eighteenth century, can be interested in the question, whether Rome, in the first, was burnt by the hand of her natural protector, or of what utility is the discussion which tends to wash away one spot from the bloody garb of Nero? The objection should not come from the theoretic lover of truth, never despising inquiry and discrimination; nor will the expulsion of falsehood from history ever appear trifling to its practical admirers. The question too is not totally unconnected with the well-known controversy on morals, on the existence of gratuitous malevolence, as any alleged motives for this supposed conduct of the tyrant are utterly unsatisfactory to the rational mind.* But its chief importance rests on the grounds I have premised. If we detect an historian in any one instance, in a peremptory and dogmatical assertion of a disputed, nay an improbable charge, have we not cause to view his writings with general suspicion, and scrutinize with jealous eye his accuracy or his candour? And we cannot select a better example than that of a direct and unqualified allegation of a plain and simple fact, into which, if false, the writer could not from any circumstances be supposed to be innocently or unwittingly betrayed.

Suetonius, then, directly and circumstantially ascribes the conflagration at Rome in the time of Nero to that detested Emperor, while Tacitus only says, *forte an dolo Imperatoris incertum*. The authority of the former seems to have prevailed, and few traditions have been more strongly believed, or sayings more frequently applied, than, "that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning." I apprehend therefore that the following arguments to the contrary will have at least the

* The desire of seeing the resemblance of Troy in flames is too childish to be imputed even to the fantastical mind of Nero, and the design of burning a great city in order to improve and rebuild it, if indeed necessary, in the plenitude of his power, for such object (while under our moderate government similar improvement is without difficulty attained on valuing the houses pulled down) does not seem to be confirmed by his subsequent actions,

• d

recommendation of novelty, as the opposite opinion has never been hinted by any writer whom I have met, except the Abbé Millot, who annexes no reasons for his doubts.

The reader who recollects the idle calumnies, which, upon a similar occasion, were thrown out against a Prince of our own, Charles the Second, and the numberless insinuations of opposite parties at that period, branding each other with the name of incendiaries, will not incautiously assent to the rumour bred by inflamed imaginations, ascribing to malice the offspring of accident.

Whoever has implicitly believed that Rome was burnt by Nero, will find, to his surprise, on the first peep into Tacitus, this passage, *Hoc tempore, Nero Antii agens*, the paragraph which first indeed, by exciting my wonder, drew my attention to this subject. The man, who is depicted as sitting on a lofty tower of his palace, attuning to the harp the poet's numbers on the destruction of Troy, in the midst of the imperial city, with whose fires his eyes were feasted, was not, at their commencement at least, in Rome at all. This should seem almost to terminate the question: but, no! the critic will say, Antium was only ten miles from Rome, and the Emperor had ample time to arrive there long before the extinction of the flames; in fact he did so, when he found that the most vigorous orders which he had issued from Antium had no effect. Such orders he had issued, and it shows his alacrity in trying to have the fire extinguished before his arrival. Let us see then how he acted after his arrival. During the very confusion and terror of the conflagration it may have been difficult to ascertain the conduct of the Prince; and it is during that period that Suetonius charges him with encouraging the flames and cherishing the incendiaries. "Voices of men," says he, "were heard, exclaiming that they acted by orders from the Emperor, and emissaries from his very household might have been apprehended in the act of spreading the flames." That the Emperor should have been absurd enough to furnish incendiaries with the authority of his name is incredible; but let us remember that within three

years past the destroyers of the castles of the nobility in France pleaded authority from that king whose throne they were on the point of overturning. To these idle tales I oppose the acknowledged behaviour of Nero, after the extinction of the fire, when it stands unveiled by that cloud of confusion and rumour which always attends present calamity. He opened his gardens for the sufferers, he pitched tents for them, he laboured to provide them with necessaries, he cheapened the price of corn; such are the testimonies of Tacitus. On his previous absence, on his subsequent conduct, I might perhaps then rest his innocence; but it is confirmed by some other strong arguments to which I now proceed.

The Emperor is charged with setting fire to the city, that he might enjoy the beauty of the sight. It appears from Tacitus, that so far from coveting the spectacle, his fault was, indolent reluctance to move from Antium. He issued from thence the most vigorous orders for extinguishing the flames, but he refused to stir till his own palace was on fire. It was in this situation that he must be supposed to have run up with his harp, immediately on his arrival, to the top of the tower of Mæcenas; a station where he stood a very reasonable chance of being broiled for his pains. The supposition is too ludicrous to admit a doubt of its falsehood; and this being as confidently asserted as any circumstance, must make us doubt of the truth of all the rest. Let us combine, then, the absence of the Emperor from the capital when the fire began, his active orders before he left Antium, his unwillingness to leave it, the situation of the city on his arrival, and his behaviour after the conflagration, and see where we can find the least probable trace of the tale of Suetonius.

The spot where the fire broke out affords another very strong argument of want of design; *In prædiis Tigellini Æmilianis proruperat*, says Tacitus. He observes, indeed, that *plus infamæ incendium habuit*, for that reason, that is, because it was on the estate of Tigellinus; but where were these Prædia? In the district called the Æmiliana. Now this district was quite without the city, as any one will find upon con-

sulting the plan of ancient Rome. *Eorum ædificia qui habitant extra Portam Frumentariam, aut in Æmilianis*, says Varro, lib. iii. *de re Rustica*. What could have induced the Emperor, whose abilities do not seem to have been contemptible, to have adopted such an extraordinary method of firing the city, by kindling the flame in its remotest suburbs? "He was accused," says Tacitus, "of having been actuated with the desire of founding a new city, and calling it by his name." Did he do so? And what prevented him? The consequence did not follow, and the imputed means were absurdly disproportionate to the motive.

That the fire in the Æmiliana was accidental will become more than probable, when we find that it was a quarter where dangerous and extensive conflagrations had happened before. It appears from Suetonius, in his account of the reign of Claudius, chap. xviii. that one had obstinately raged in this region, during the life of that Prince: *Ubi Æmiliana pertinacius arderent*. And it appears that it was of consequence enough to call for the presence and incessant labour of the Emperor himself and his whole court: We may reasonably conjecture, therefore, that it was a part of the suburbs, for some reason or other, perhaps by being the site of hazardous manufactures, particularly exposed and obnoxious to these calamities.

It is true that Tacitus, in another place, says, with a seeming contradiction, *Initium in ea parte Circi ortum, que Palatino Cælioque Montibus contigua est*; and Fleury in his Ecclesiastical History, founding the assertion on this passage, says it broke out in some shops about the Circus, without taking notice of the other alleged site of its commencement.

The commentators on Tacitus have endeavoured to reconcile the difference, and insist that it broke out in two places, the Circus and the Æmiliana. Now, as to the Circus, Tacitus himself accounts for its rise and progress there, *Ubi per tabernas, quibus id Mercimonium inerat quo flamma alitur, ceptus ignis*. The fire began in certain shops filled with inflammable materials, and naturally calculated to

originate and diffuse the flames. Where they could so easily be accounted for, who would have seen, reflected by their light, the deadly visage of the tyrant, but those whose horrors of his crimes and terror of his wickedness raised on every occasion the imperial phantom before their alarmed imaginations. Let us not fear that by deducting this little burthen of guilt we shall leave too small a portion of infamy to satiate resentment and deter imitation. The bloody roll of Nero's crimes will scarcely appear diminished by expunging this inferior title to abhorrence.

It is an inferior circumstance, yet not entirely unworthy of note, that the rumours which had reached the ears of the two historians, as to Nero's conduct, essentially varied. To the one he had been represented as going openly and publicly to the summit of Mæcenas' tower to sing the fate of Troy, while to the other he was depicted as retiring into his private apartments (*in domesticam scenam*) there secretly to enjoy the devastation of his groaning country. Uncertainty and contradiction are the sisters of unfounded report.

From the account given us of this event by Tacitus, we find that the Emperor's object, in at length leaving Antium to go to Rome, was to save his palace. Now in this he did not succeed. The palace was destroyed, and yet he is afterwards accused of constructing a new palace of wonderful magnificence out of the ruins of his country (*Usus est patriæ ruinis*, says Tacitus) not without insinuation that such might have been partly the object of the antecedent devastation. There is nothing in his previous conduct to support the suspicion, for he was anxious to save his former residence, and to prevent the necessity of erecting a new one.

The anxiety of Nero to avoid the charge is utterly incompatible with the narration of Suetonius, *Incendit urbem tam palam*, says that historian, *Ut plerique Consulares, Cubicularios ejus, cum stupra tædæque, in prædiis suis deprehensos non attigerint*. It is incredible that he, who so much dreaded the imputation, should have committed the fact without disguise. That he

used every exertion to avert the charge appears from Tacitus—by anxious and active care to expedite the rebuilding of the city—by princely largesses to the sufferers—by supplications and atoning sacrifices to the gods, he laboured to extricate himself from the infamy. It is true he was not successful. Such was the odium against him. *Non ope humana, non largitionibus principis, aut delum placamentis decedebat infamia.* He then endeavoured to throw the suspicion on the Christians, since he found the world too prejudiced to ascribe the event to accident—with equal want of success indeed. But all which I wish to infer is, that this extreme anxiety confutes the notion of his rash unguarded promotion of the calamity; and that he was particularly distressed at this rumour appears from his known character, which was, in general, to despise all rumours, *Nihil patientius quam maledicta et contritia hominum tulit.*—Suetonius, p. 258.

The extent of the power of prejudice against this miserable Prince, at this period, cannot be more strongly exemplified than in the murmurs which Tacitus mentions, occasioned by his opening the city and widening the streets, because, as was alleged, the old narrow streets and lofty houses contributed exceedingly to the salubrity of Rome, by protecting the passengers from the heat of the sun. I will even draw an argument from the virulence of Suetonius. "He would not suffer," says that writer, "the bodies of the dead who perished in the fire, to be burnt by their friends, nor the ruins of the edifices to be removed by the owners, but took the charge upon himself, for the sake of plunder." Whether those who were burnt already required to be burnt again I know not; but does not the ill-nature of the remark proclaim the inclination of the author? Is it not more natural to suppose, that the fear of pestilence, from the exposition of bodies left to the random care of individuals, in a time of general distraction, required the interposition of government, and the adoption of public regulations, to prevent the possibility of private negligence? And was it not right in the governing power of the state to refuse

to trust to the weakness or indolence of the subject, the office of removing rubbish and ruins, whose immense heaps forbade improvement and postponed renovation?

The truth is, when Suetonius wrote, invective against the race of Cæsar opened the way to honour and preferment. Abuse of the Augustan family was the fashion of succeeding times, and the instrument of flattery with succeeding Emperors. With infinite caution, therefore, are we to admit the adulatory invective of the writers of the age of Trajan. The fidelity of history was made to bow to the etiquette of courts and the interest of historians.

This propensity to blacken the Cæsars, received, in the particular instance of Nero, additional height in latter times from the enmity of the Christians. His cruel persecution of Christianity, and his inordinate wickedness, in averting upon its votaries the calumny thrown upon himself, with the signal martyrdoms of St. Peter and St. Paul, under his dominion, have stamped him with the most sanguinary dye in the annals of religion. It was natural to surmise that the man who so unjustly accused others, had not been unjustly accused himself. His innocence was supposed to include their crimination; and as the empire became Christian, it became in a manner impious to doubt his guilt.

On whom does the authority of this legend rest? As appears to me, on the character of Suetonius alone. The careful peruser of Tacitus will, I think, agree with me, that he did not believe the tale; he wrote before Suetonius; and possessed earlier and better channels of inquiry. Suetonius was secretary to Adrain, whose reign was preceded by the death of Tacitus.* The next author who mentions the charge with confidence is Dio Cassius, who lived in the reign of Alexander Severus, two hundred years after the event; no testimony can go beyond its first original; the tribe of servile copiers add not a jot of weight to the evidence.

Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Marcus Aurelius Cassiodorus and Jornandes, the

* As is generally supposed.

only subsequent Latin writers who repeat the clamour, merely echo the assertions of Suetonius and Dio. They could not be much better judges of the matter than we at this day, had they even taken the trouble to weigh the evidence. Aurelius Victor and Eutropius lived at a period three hundred years distant from the time of the conflagration, in the reigns of Julian and Valentinian; Cassiodorus was consul under Theodoric, and born in 476; and Jornandes, in Justinian's age, was secretary to a king of the Goths. As to the principal modern writers who assert and insist on the fact, and particularly the ecclesiastical historians, Xiphilinus, Vitranus and Sulpicius, though they lived earlier than Fleury, who in the present century supports their opinion, their assertions can have no more weight than his, nor their knowledge of the facts be greater than ours. Xiphilinus was the professed abridger of Dio Cassius. Dio repeated from Suetonius, and upon the foundation of Suetonius' authority the whole fabric must ultimately depend. If any thing has been added, it has probably been the work of exuberant imagination, like that of Karholtus of Hamburg, a modern ecclesiastical writer, who represents the Emperor at a banquet sending forth troops of incendiaries, and sitting to hear at intervals the triumphant tale of their horrid exploits, a picture of which he could not have found the least trait in any ancient historian. It remains only to observe, that Suetonius, the father of this tale, could not have been unwittingly deceived into this assertion.

Thus have I endeavoured to scrutinize, in this instance, the accuracy and authenticity of Suetonius, which may

be a clue to his general character as a writer, the only object perhaps which could have justified my calling the attention to a question so remote, and seemingly so uninteresting.

Always, as I have said, has that historian appeared to me to be overrated; the indecency of his descriptions has been often condemned, and it was well observed, that Suetonius wrote the lives of the Emperors with the same licentiousness with which they lived. Were I to compare Suetonius with any writer of our own time, in point of credit due to his narration, I would scarcely assign him a place superior to Smollet's; I mean not with respect to composition, but as to authenticity and materials. Both of them seem to have compiled from the *actus diurni*, or newspapers of the day, and to merit equal authority with those crude and hasty chronicles. If the one has lived for eighteen centuries, while the other possibly may not for one, it has perhaps been owing to the charms of his composition, not to the dignity of his history.

If these remarks shall in any degree tend to ascertain the rank of this famed historian in the scale of history, or rather by calling the attention of more accurate observers to the general complexion of his works, to induce them to ascertain it, they have an importance which at this remote time they could not borrow from the subject itself. They may perhaps also derive some additional claim to attention, from the circumstance of a celebrated attack having been lately made by Mr. Whitaker of Manchester, on the authenticity of his rival historian, in a comparison between Tacitus and Gibbon.

Trans. R. I. Acad.

REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A Letter to Lord Viscount Southwell, containing Remarks on vesting in his Majesty the nomination of Catholic Bishops.... By J. B. Trotter, Esq. late private Secretary to the Right Honourable Charles James Fox.... Dublin, Printed by H. Fitzpatrick, Capel-street. 1808. p.p. 36. price, 1s. 8d.

SINCERELY attached to Catholic Emancipation, on the broad prin-

ciple, that the State ought to have no cognizance over opinions on the subject of religion, we rejoiced at the more liberal practice which had for some time prevailed, to do away the penal code, and remove disabilities on account of difference of opinions. We therefore cannot but regret that a mistaken policy has latterly interrupted the progress of this good work, and that temporary party politics